

## CALIFORNIA

### California Comes Together to Increase CRC Screenings by Establishing the California Colorectal Cancer Coalition (C4)

In 2006, partners from across California gathered to address the problem that only half of the state's eligible population was getting screened for colorectal cancer and rates were even lower among minority populations and the uninsured. With more than 6.6 million people lacking health insurance in California, there was room for improvement.

Although many organizations have recognized this problem, California suffers a dilemma endemic in the large, densely populated state: many organizations working in silos towards a common cause. In response, a broad section of volunteers who were originally part of the California Dialogue on Cancer (CDOC) implementation team focused on colorectal cancer efforts, committed to form the California Colorectal Cancer Coalition (C4).

The C4 follows the comprehensive cancer control model and serves as the uniting body for those working to increase colorectal cancer screening. Since 2006, C4 has become an independently operating 501(c)(3) organization with a mission to save lives and reduce suffering from colorectal cancer in all Californians. C4 strives to complete this mission by reducing disparities in colorectal cancer screening, diagnosis, and treatment; increasing capacity for colorectal cancer screening; and advocating for colorectal cancer screening programs.

One of C4's primary strengths is the diversity of its board, which includes survivors, surgeons, and community advocates. Board membership includes representation from the American Cancer Society (ACS), Kaiser Permanente, California Department of Public Health (CDPH), and the California Endowment. By drawing on its diverse membership, C4 has been able to work toward its goals by implementing projects in many different arenas, including continuing medical education (CME) for health care providers, media outreach, advocacy projects at the State Capitol, and hands-on screening days that reach out to the uninsured.

#### Continuing Medical Education (CME)

C4 served as a collaborating partner for a CME entitled "Colorectal Cancer: The Long and the Short of It."

#### Media Outreach

With diverse representation from agencies such as ACS, CDPH, and Paine Public Relations, C4 is uniquely positioned to present a unified message to state leaders and media about the importance of colorectal cancer prevention and screening.

#### Advocacy Projects

In late 2007, C4 organized an advocacy forum in Sacramento to engage community members in lobbying for increased screening. Through the event, C4 had March designated as Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month in California. The 2007 forum also helped launch a highly successful lobby day at the State Capitol in March 2008, which garnered support from California Senate leader Darrel Steinberg. Thirty-five people attended the event, and as a team they shared information about colorectal cancer with all 210 members of the legislature. State legislators were given maps of their districts prepared by the California Cancer Registry that showed the number of their constituents who died from colon cancer, compared to the population-adjusted expected death rates, and the number of constituents diagnosed at late stages. Thus, they received a snapshot on how well screening efforts were being carried out in their districts.

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#### Hands-On Screening Days

- C4 collaborated in the expansion of Operation Access's colonoscopy screening day program. The program, which originated in the Bay Area, recruits surgeons and gastroenterologists to provide free colonoscopies to uninsured patients. C4 brought this model to Kaiser Permanente in San Diego in collaboration with Project Access San Diego and held two Super Surgery and

# Stories of Success

Colonoscopy Days. Twenty-two people received colonoscopies; of those, one was diagnosed with early-stage colorectal cancer and four had advanced neoplasias removed.

- C4 also is working with the San Diego Council of Community Clinics and the San Diego County

Medical Society Foundation to distribute 2,000 donated fecal occult blood test cards to uninsured community clinic patients. C4 hopes to expand this program throughout the state.

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